

REMARKS

The present amendment is submitted in order to advance the prosecution of the case.

1. A change of correspondence address is attached hereto in favor of the undersigned and it is requested that all further correspondence be directed to the undersigned attorney. A power of attorney has been forwarded to the Applicant and will be filed as soon as the signed document is returned.

2. Applicant may revise the specification and drawing in response to a forthcoming office action on the merits if required.

3. Claims 1 to 90 have been cancelled and new claims 91 to 102 have been added. These claims correspond largely to claims 11 through 22, part of the Group I claims in accordance with the election or restriction requirement.

4. Pursuant to the requirement for restriction, Applicant hereby elects the invention in Group I, namely, the method of operating an enclosure classified in class 705, sub-class 1. The newly presented claims 91 to 102 are within this method.

5. Pursuant to the requirement for election of species, Applicant elects species B to which claims 11 through 22 were originally drawn but to which claims 91 to 102 are currently drawn.

6. With respect to the newly presented claims, it will be noted that almost the entirety of the description of the present application is directed to an asynchronous system, which is to say, a system wherein the delivery and collection processes are managed locally by the Automated Collection Point without requiring synchronous instructions from the central servers. The alternative option of a synchronous system is outlined briefly at P.47, lines 7 to 12.

The reason for this is set out at P.23, 11.3-11: "all communication is asynchronous between the ACP server and the Application Server, and the ACP server and the ACP sites. For example, if a communication failure occurred between the ACP server and the ACP sites, then the ACP sites would still be able to perform the Deliver and Collect processes. If the communication were synchronous which it isn't then the ACP site would be out of action until the communication problem had been fixed."

Applicant has noticed however that originally filed Claim 11 was inadvertently drafted to a synchronous rather than an asynchronous system, wherein the tracking number is validated at the remote computing site and the command to open the locker is communicated in real time to the Automated Collection Point. This does not reflect the system as described in the majority of the specification.

In order to correct this error in the claims and in order to direct the claims to the asynchronous model principally described and hence to advance examination, Applicant accordingly submits the attached amended claims. Thus new Claim 91 replaces originally filed claim 11, and has been re-written to define an asynchronous rather than a synchronous system; and new claims 92 -102 replace originally filed Claims 12 - 22 and recite the same subject matter with the appropriate changes to their dependencies.

For the examiner's reference, attention is drawn in particular to the following passages of the Description wherein the operation of the asynchronous model is set out in detail.

In order to identify the parcel when it is delivered to the Automated Collection Point, a tracking number is generated and converted into a barcode which is added to the label on the parcel.

(P.36, lines 3 - 4.)

The process by which the tracking number is communicated in advance to the Automated Collection Point is set out at P.36 line 22 - P.37 line 4:

"In steps 228 and 229 the Etailer 700 collates the bar-code with the Parcel ID, ACP address and ACP Site 900 ID for the order and then sends this to the Application Server in step 230. This process is completed every 30 minutes, with orders being batched together. In step 231 the Application Server then sends the bar-code and associated Parcel ID to the ACP server which then uses the site ID to identify the relevant ACP Site 900 and then download the bar-code and Parcel ID to the local CENTRAL CONSOLE. At this point the ACP Site 900 is ready to receive that delivery."

In the simplest embodiment, what happens when the parcel arrives at the Automated Collection Point is described at P.38, lines 14 - 24: if a barcode is present the deliverer presents it to the bar-code reader of the CENTRAL CONSOLE. Alternatively a Parcel ID can be manually entered on a keypad. If a valid bar-code or a valid Parcel ID is entered the CENTRAL CONSOLE opens a locker and the deliverer places the parcel inside and shuts the door.

While it will be clear from the foregoing that the process of validating the tracking number occurs locally at the Automated Collection Point, the necessary mechanics of the validation process after the tracking number is downloaded from the ACP server to the CENTRAL CONSOLE will be evident to those skilled in the art and hence are not explained in detail. Thus for example the validation step is merely implicit in steps 316 - 314 of Fig. 10, and in the corresponding passage of the Description at P.38 lines 14 - 24, which merely refers to "a valid bar-code". It will be appreciated therefore that the use of a checksum as defined in originally filed claim 11 is merely one way of achieving this end, and the reference to a checksum has accordingly been removed from new claim 91.

It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that in order to present a label on a parcel to a fixed reader on the console of a lockerbank, the deliverer must necessarily offer the parcel physically to the lockerbank. Where the parcel is heavy or awkwardly shaped, or the deliverer is holding other items, this may be inconvenient. Where the deliverer has a large number of parcels to deliver, this inconvenience may become a significant impediment to intensive use of the lockerbank.

New Claim 91, like Claim 11 as originally filed defines an alternative method which overcomes this problem. Instead of reading the tracking number on the parcel directly by a fixed reader, the tracking number is read by means of a handheld device, and then wirelessly transmitted by means of a transponder on the handheld device to a receiver on the Automated Collection Point. The deliverer therefore needs only to apply the handheld device to the package, and is thus relieved of the burden of manhandling the package in front of a fixed reader.

It is submitted that none of the cited documents discloses the use of a handheld device to transmit a code from a parcel to an Automated Collection Point for opening a locker to receive the parcel. Hence new Claims 91 - 102 are deemed novel and inventive, and an early notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

7. The Examiner is respectfully reminded that the correspondence address has changed and that any further action should be directed to the undersigned at the address given below.

8. A petition for an automatic three month extension of the term and a PTO-2038 form covering the fee are enclosed.

Respectfully submitted,
The Firm of Karl F. Ross P.C.



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Petition for Ext.
Request for Address Change